

Clifton Park Town Board Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2003

A special meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Clifton Park was held in the Town Office Building at 7:00 p.m. in order to hear comments on the 2004 Preliminary Budget, Supervisor Barrett presiding.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Present: Councilman Paolucci
Councilman Speckhard
Councilman Roth
Councilwoman Walowit
Supervisor Barrett
Town Clerk O'Donnell

Also Present: Louis Gerard, Superintendent of Highways
Michael Shahan, Town Administrator

PUBLIC HEARING, 7:00 PM TO CONSIDER THE 2004 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

The Town Clerk read the Notice of Public Hearing as published in The Daily Gazette on October 30, 2003.

Supervisor Barrett announced there will be no town tax in 2004. He noted challenges the town will be facing are the New York State Pension Fund increases, as well as Workman Compensation and medical benefits. Monies for future trail development, increase funding for Shenendehowa Senior Citizens Center, CAPTAIN and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Arts and Culture Committee and \$45,000 for a senior van with a lift are included, as well as a \$2.6 million tax cut for County and Highway taxes. He noted town debt continues to be reduced. Supervisor Barrett stated he expects there to be a substantial surplus this year. He quoted from the Moody's Report, noting the town's strong financial position. The Supervisor said it is important that the costs for certain groups in town that serve more than Clifton Park, namely Halfmoon, be split fairly and evenly between the two municipalities, particularly the Saturday Night Live YMCA program and Job Connection.

Councilman Roth said he has spoken to Bill Casey of CAPTAIN and they have expressed an interest in running Job Connection, however, Councilman Roth stated it is important the programs be funded equitably between Clifton Park, Halfmoon and Malta. He stated there is money in the budget for the program but that money will only be spent if the other towns come up with their share.

Supervisor Barrett said as it stands tonight, there is nothing in the budget for the Saturday

Night Live Program, however, that doesn't mean that the town is not willing or ready to support the program but just want to make sure there is support from the other communities that are also receiving the benefit.

Councilman Speckhard said these issues need to be dealt with on two levels – the budgetary level and the human level. He understands the need to evenly distribute the costs of programs among towns but doesn't want to deprive youngsters of very important services if a 50/50 financial support isn't possible.

Supervisor Barrett said the town wouldn't walk away from the programs but it is important for the town's future that the cost of the programs be shared equitably.

Councilman Paolucci stated it is time to take a hard look at some of the programs and verify that the benefit the town is putting in is going to the residents of the Town of Clifton Park. He asked if the town want to fund regional programs for other segments of the state or should those funds be focused in an arts and culture program that is based in the town. He hopes the agreements can be worked out.

Councilwoman Walowit stated the other towns involved are financially able to share in the support of these programs.

Councilman Speckhard said the money that is being spent on these programs comes from sales tax, much of which comes from outside the town. He said in many of the other areas of the budget, there are benefits to non-residents. He said he doesn't want to see the kids of Clifton Park, primarily, or Halfmoon, secondarily, negatively affected by some mathematical equation. Supervisor Barrett stated that would not happen and the growth of programs and opportunities will continue. He noted the summer program will be expanded.

Councilman Roth said the Town Board has a responsibility to make sure wherever the dollars are coming from that they are allocated properly to satisfy and meet the needs of the community. He stated there must be a level of fairness with other communities.

Councilman Roth said the Clifton Park/Halfmoon Ambulance request for funds has been going up substantially over the last few years. He said between 2001 and 2002 their cash reserves increased by \$41,000 and their unrestricted fund balance increased by \$112,000. Based upon those increases, he asked the Board to consider a reduction in the current request of \$842,262 and asked the Ambulance District to reduce their cash reserves by \$10,000.

Councilman Paolucci agreed that this is a reasonable request and asked if the residents of the special district vote on the budget. Councilman Roth replied no.

Councilman Speckhard spoke with regard to developing the town along its riverfront. He said the purpose behind purchasing the Jacobsen property was to begin to develop recreational facilities along the river, as well as an emergency boat launch. He noted the

maintenance of the area has been challenging to the Buildings and Grounds Department and from discussions with Environmental Specialist O'Brien, recommended adding the following to the budget: \$5000 to trails extension/improvement, \$5000 for mowing of the Preserve, and \$2500 for mowing of the Jacobsen property which is adjacent to the Preserve. Councilman Speckhard said it is necessary to have a survey of the Jacobsen property as a basis that could be used to discuss a long term plan. It is estimated the survey cost could be approximately \$10,000 for a total of \$22,500.

Councilman Roth said there should be a good surplus this year and recommended making a list of items to be considered.

Councilman Paolucci said the Board supports the waterfront but thinks it would be responsible to take a wait and see attitude.

Discussion ensued as to whether or not to add this additional request to the budget at this time. Supervisor Barrett reported the two most immediate needs for waterfront access are the Vischer Ferry Fire Department and the Shen Rowing Club. He said if the improvements are not done properly it could turn into a negative. It was decided to add the Preserve/waterfront recommendations to a contingency list for 2004.

Councilman Roth expressed appreciation to Highway Superintendent Gerard for working with the Town Board in preparing the budget.

Town Administrator Shahan reported DEC inspected Olde Nott Farm Sewer and in order to be in compliance another \$15,000 should be added to the budget. This will cover relining one of the tanks.

Supervisor Barrett agreed work needs to be done on the Olde Nott Farm Sewer and said it is important to have a public meeting with the residents of the sewer district before any work is started.

Councilman Speckhard stated this will have to be included in the budget as it is part of 2004 tax levy.

MOTION BY Councilman Speckhard, seconded by Councilwoman Walowit to increase the Olde Nott Farm Sewer District budget by \$15,000.

**Ayes: Councilman Paolucci, Councilman Speckhard, Councilman Roth
Councilwoman Walowit, Supervisor Barrett**

Noes: None

MOTION CARRIED

The public hearing was opened at 7:50 p.m.

Laura Thompson, member of the CAC Arts and Culture Committee, expressed appreciation to the Town Board for their support of and generous increase in funding for the arts in the community.

Jim Baisley, Barkwood Drive, said there should be access to the waterfront and asked the Board to not “wait and see” on too many projects and not to prolong beginning work in the Vischer Ferry area. He asked if there were requests for additional staff in the Buildings and Grounds Department for 2004. Mr. Shahan responded there is a request for more summer help. Mr. Baisley believes the Buildings and Grounds Department is tremendously overworked in the summer. He noted park district taxes, not sales tax money, pay for the parks. He questioned the use of park district tax dollars and said there are a lot of inconsistencies about the park districts. He said the town should have a summer program and hire someone for just mowing the lawns. Mr. Baisley praised the town staff.

Supervisor Barrett said residents of park districts have an ownership in the systems and have local decision making.

Councilman Speckhard noted some Mr. Baisley’s concerns, particularly concerning mowing, are being addressed. He said in 2004 the park district resolution may be changed to allow the park districts to hire people within the district. The big concern is liability but it is being looked at. He continued, as far as development signs are concerned a park district can put up two signs using park district money. It was emphasized that residents of the park districts, not the town, make the recommendations as to what is included in a park district.

Everyone was given an opportunity to speak in favor of or against the proposed 2004 Preliminary Budget and no one else wished to be heard. Supervisor Barrett declared the public hearing closed at 8:30 p.m.

MOTION by Councilman Paolucci, seconded by Councilman Roth, to adjourn the meeting to the next regular meeting or any other meeting necessary for the conduct of Town business.

Motion carried at 8:30 p.m.

Patricia O’Donnell
Town Clerk